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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PRAGUE 000745

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/29/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [ENRG](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [CVIS](#) [EZ](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: RADIO FARDA DISPUTE AT CENTER STAGE IN
CZECH-IRANIAN RELATIONS

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THIS CABLE IS BEING RETRANSMITTED UNDER A NEW MRN

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sputtered and concern over Iran's nuclear program grew, some Czech political figures, particularly former Social Democrat Foreign Minister Jan Kavan, remained attracted to the &holy grail of engineering partnerships and participation in the Iranian energy sector. In 2000, the GOCR implemented (under USG pressure) a restrictive law that proscribed any form of Czech participation in Iran's Bushehr nuclear plant, a measure that, according to the Deputy Director of the MFA's UN Department Pavel Klucky (whose office oversees UN sanctions and IAEA-related issues), earned the Czechs considerable ire among fellow NSG members. According to Klucky, this law applies exclusively to the Bushehr plant; assistance to all other Iranian nuclear facilities is subject to compliance with EU Regulation 1334 covering dual-use technologies. Any potential contracts are further examined against relevant export control regimes (including ours; septel).

17. (SBU) The desire to move past the problematic recent trade history between the Czechs and the Iranians has, on at least one occasion, prompted ill-advised remarks from Czech leaders. In December 2005, Iranian state press outlets stated that Minister of Trade and Industry Milan Urban suggested during trade talks that the Czech Republic could be prepared to assist the Iranian nuclear program, but other GOCR elements moved quickly to dismiss the idea. Trade Ministry spokesmen later explained that this would occur only within the context of a more general improvement in trade relations, and asserted that Urban had meant that such cooperation would only be possible if Iran were back in full compliance with appropriate IAEA requirements and supervision.

Radio Farda's Impact on the Nuclear Issue

18. (C) The Radio Farda controversy has been important even in the nuclear issue, with Czech support for RFE/RL having virtually eliminated much of the Czech participation in an Iranian energy sector where Czech engineers had once figured

prominently. Iranian officials have frequently told both private Czech citizens and public officials that there would be considerable financial trade rewards for the Czechs if they would end Radio Farda broadcasts. These benefits, moreover, would not apply only to the nuclear industry. Septel will consider Czech-Iran proliferation concerns and issues.

Radio Farda Keeps Diplomatic Ties "Low and Very Cool"

¶9. (C) If Radio Farda has provoked a strongly negative economic reaction from Iran, its diplomatic fallout has been, to most observers, also disproportionate. Both sides withdrew their ambassadors soon after the initiation of broadcasts in ¶1998. Since then, the post of Iranian Charge' in Prague has been occupied by diplomats of incrementally lesser rank and reputation. According to Mr. Mrazek of the MFA, the last Iranian Charge,, Hussain Rezvani, departed Prague nearly six months ago and will not be replaced until later this summer. The acting Charge, is a Third Secretary; the new Charge, is also supposedly a relatively low-ranking diplomat. The MFA has had virtually no contact with the Embassy since last winter.

¶10. (C) According to numerous MFA officials, before Mr. Rezvani,s departure from Prague, the Farda controversy dominated nearly all discussions and discourse with the Iranians. Rezvani made numerous entreaties to GOCR to cut off Farda broadcasts and, explicitly acknowledging an embargo that his government has denied imposing, also dangled before the Czechs the prospect of contracts, improved trade terms, and more cordial relationship if only the Radio Farda broadcasts would stop and the Czech President "apologize to the Iranian people." The GOCR was not interested.

¶11. (C) The frost in Czech-Iranian diplomatic relations extends to travel and visa regimes as well. According to MOI statistics, only 69 Iranian citizens enjoy permanent residency in the Czech Republic, including asylum cases. MFA Consular Department Director Ivo Svoboda told Poloff that travel ties between the two countries are nearly non-existent and that there are no direct flights between Tehran and Prague. Iranian travelers are subject the strictest and most onerous visa conditions permitted by Czech law. They must, among other requirements, obtain a visa even to transit the passenger terminal en route to other countries (a requirement imposed on only a dozen other countries in the world), and

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they must present the adjudicating Czech Consular officials an official letter of invitation, show financial resources within Iran, and pay a substantial deposit (similar to a bond) that they forfeit to the Czech Government if they fail to return to Iran. Applicants are screened against an Interior Ministry database for security risks or other issues. According to Svoboda, Iranian travelers are considered a very high risk for both illegal migration and security purposes.
CABANISS